

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----073559 151853Z /40

O R 151811Z JUL 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9144  
INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ACCRA 5414

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1  
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PGOV, GH  
SUBJ: ACHEAMPONG MAKES PERSONAL APPEAL TO PRESIDENT CARTER  
FOR "MEDICAL AID"

REF: ACCRA 2618

1. SUMMARY: ACHEAMPONG HAS ASKED ME TO TRANSMIT HIS

"PERSONAL APPEAL" TO PRESIDENT CARTER FOR MEDICAL

AID TO ASSIST IN CORRECTING DETERIORATING MEDICAL  
SITUATION RESULTING FROM CONTINUING STRIKE OF  
GHANAIAN DOCTORS. HE BLAMES COMMUNIST SUBVERSION  
FOR CREATING CURRENT UNREST IN GHANA, A VIEW WE DO  
NOT RPT NOT SHARE AND HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT.  
REAL REASONS FOR CURRENT CRISIS ARE INTERNAL, AND WE  
THINK SMC GOVERNMENT'S DAYS ARE NUMBERED. WE  
RECOMMEND AGAINST INVOLVING THE US IN THIS DOMESTIC  
SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

2. HEAD OF STATE AND CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME MILITARY

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COUNCIL (SMC) ACHEAMPONG SUMMOND ME TO THE CASTLE LATE  
MORNING OF JULY 15. SECRETARY TO THE SMC BEECHAM  
ESCORTED ME INTO OFFICE BUT ACHEAMPONG DISMISSED HIM  
IMMEDIATELY SAYING HE WISHED TO SEE ME ALONE. HE  
GREETED ME CORDIALLY AND APOLOGIZED FOR SHORT NOTICE.  
I THANKED ACHEAMPONG FOR HIS JULY 4 CONGRATULATORY  
LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT, COPY OF WHICH MINISTRY OF

FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAD PROVIDED ME. HE IN TURN THANKED ME FOR TRANSMITTING RECENT LETTER FROM AMBASSADOR YOUNG AND SIAD HE HAD JUST RESPONDED TO IT.

3. ACHEAMPONG THEN GOT TO THE POINT. HE SAID HE WANTED ME TO TRANSMIT HIS "PERSONAL APPEAL" TO PRESIDENT CARTER FOR "MEDICAL AID". HE SAID "PEOPLE WERE DYING" AS A RESULT OF CURRENT DOCTORS' STRIKE IN GHANA, AND HE HOPED WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO HELP THOSE INNOCENT VICTIMS OF THE STRIKE ACTION.

4. BEFORE I COULD DO ANYTHING OTHER THAN REGISTER SURPRISE, ACHEAMPONG INTERRUPTED TO REMIND ME OF OUR CONVERSATION IN APRIL (REFTEL) IN WHICH HE HAD EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN OVER SOVIET ENCROACHMENTS IN AFRICA AND PARTICULARLY IN GHANA. HE SAID HIS SECURITY PEOPLE NOW HAD ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE THAT "THE COMMUNISTS" WERE BEHIND THE CURRENT UNREST IN GHANA AND WERE ACTIVELY "INSTIGATING" ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AMONG BOTH STUDENTS AND STRIKING DOCTORS. THE LATTER HE SAID THERE WAS A SMALL GROUP OF MILITANT YOUNG GHANAINA DOCTORS TRAINED IN RUSSIA (WHOSE MEDICAL CREDENTIALS HE QUESTIONED IN PASSING) WHO WERE CAUSING MUCH OF THE PROBLEM. STRONG COMMUNIST INFLUENCE ALSO EXISTED AMONG THE STUDENTS,  
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SOME OF WHOM EVEN HAD "A CUBAN CONNECTION," HE AVOWED. HE BELIEVED THAT IF THE CURRENT UNREST FORCED THE SMC TO STEP DOWN PREMATURELY, THE COMMUNISTS MIGHT WELL MAKE A GRAB FOR POWER--A TRAGEDY BOTH FOR GHANA AND AFRICA. THIS HE COULD NEVER PERMIT. HE WAS THEREFORE HOPEFUL THAT WE AS A FRIEND OF GHANA MIGHT HELP IN THE IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CRISIS--NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE POTENTIAL COMMUNIST THREAT BUT ALSO ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS.

5. I AGAIN INDICATED SURPRISE AT THE REQUEST AND SAID OUR IMPRESSION HAD BEEN THAT THE CURRENT PROBLEMS WERE LARGELY INTERNAL IN NATURE. THE CHAIRMAN REPEATED THAT HE HAD EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY. I SAID I WOULD OF COURSE FORWARD HIS REQUEST TO WASHINGTON. IN DOING SO, HOWEVER, I ANTICIPATED THAT CERTAIN QUESTIONS WOULD ARISE, ONE OF WHICH WOULD BE THE INEVITABLE CHARGE THAT IN PROVIDING SUCH ASSISTANCE WE WOULD BE INTERFERING IN GHANA'S DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. "NO, NO, NO," WAS THE CHAIRMAN'S RESPONSE; THIS WOULD BE A "HUMANITARIAN GESTURE." TO MY QUESTION OF WHAT KIND OF MEDICAL AID HE HAD IN MIND, HE SAID HE HOPED WE

MIGHT PROVIDE SOME DOCTORS AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES. I SAID THAT I FORESAW REAL DIFFICULTIES IN PROVIDING AMERICAN DOCTORS UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

6. I THEN ASKED WHETHER HE HAD APPROACHED OTHER FREINDLY COUNTRIES FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE. HE SAID HE HAD ASKED HIS HIGH COMMISSIONER IN LONDON TO SOUND OUT THE BRITISH, AND THE NIGERIANS WERE ALSO BEING APPROACHED. NO RESPONSE YET. (COMMENT: I HAVE NOT YET CHECKED WITH MY BRITISH AND NIGERIAN COLLEAGUES HERE.)

7. FURTHER DISCUSSION OF GOG'S CURRENT POLITICAL CONFRONTATION WITH PROFESSIONALS AND RECENT REFERENCES  
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IN PRESS AND GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS TO AN UNNAMED FOREIGN POWER "INSTIGATING UNREST" (ACHEAMPONG SAID REFERENCES WERE TO SOVIET UNION--NOT USG) WILL BE REPORTED SEPTTEL.

8. I TOLD CHAIRMAN THAT WHILE I WOULD TRANSMIT HIS APPEAL TO WASHINGTON, I WOULD BE LESS THAN HONEST IF I DID NOT POINT OUT THAT MY GOVERNMENT MIGHT WELL HAVE SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT RESPONDING AFFIRMATIVELY UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS BUT HOPED I WOULD DO THE BEST I COULD.

9. COMMENT: OUR RECENT REPORTING SHOULD PROVIDE

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EXDIS

DEPARTMENT WITH AMPLE BACKGROUND ON CURRENT CRISIS. IN BRIEF, SMC HAS NOW AGREED UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE TO AN ORDERLY TRANSFER OF POWER TO A CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT OVER TWO-YEAR PERIOD. RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE IS THEREFORE NO LONGER THE ISSUE BUT RATHER HOW SOON. THE STRIKING PROFESSIONALS, INCORPORATING ELEVEN MAJOR PROFESSIONS AND BULK OF GHANAIAN INTELLIGENTSIA, ARE INSISTING THAT THE SMC MUST STEP DOWN MUCH SOONER, PREFERABLY BY THE END OF 1977. RECENT STRIKES BY DOCTORS AND NURSES HAVE PARALYZED KORLE BU, THE MAJOR ACCRA HOSPITAL, AND WHILE THERE ARE REPORTEDLY SOME SKELETON STAFFS TREATING EMERGENCY PATIENTS (AND PRIVATE DOCTORS ARE SEEING SOME FAVORED PATIENTS IN THEIR HOMES), IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT SOME PATIENTS HAVE DIED FOR LACK OF ADEQUATE MEDICAL TREATMENT. HENCE ACHEAMPONG'S APPEAL TO US, BRITIAN AND NIGERIA.

10. WE DO NOT RPT NOT SHARE ACHEAMPONG'S VIEW THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE TO BLAME FOR THE CURRENT UNREST, AND REFERENCES IN PRESS TO "FOREIGN POWERS" HAVE BEEN GREETED WITH CONTEMPT AND DERISION BY VIRTUALLY ALL OF OUR GHANAIAN CONTACTS (EXCEPT ACHEAMPONG HIMSELF). WE REGARD PRESENT CRISIS AS OVERWHELMINGLY  
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INTERNAL AND STEMMING DIRECTLY FROM GENUINE DIS-AFFECTION AMONG POPULATION. REAL REASONS ARE DISGUST WITH SMC CORRUPTION AND INCOMPETENCE, WHICH HAS RESULTED IN RAMPANT INFLATION, SHORTAGES OF FOOD, FOREIGN EXCHANGE AND RAW MATERIALS, AND EROSION OF GHANA'S IMAGE AND CREDIT STANDING ABROAD. INTELLIGENTSIA HAVE NOW BANDED TOGETHER IN WHAT IS A RATHER REMARKABLE ATTEMPT BY CIVILIANS TO OVERTHROW A MILITARY REGIME, AND THEY HAVE ALREADY SUCCEEDED IN EXTRACTING FROM ACHEAMPONG A PRECISE TIMETABLE FOR A TRANSITION TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE IN TWO YEARS. THEY MAY OR MAY NOT SUCCEED IN FORCING HIM OUT BY THE END OF 1977 AS THEY WISH, FOR HE STILL HAS THE MILITARY MUSCLE AND THUS FAR HAS KEPT THE POWERFUL TRADE UNION CONGRESS IN LINE. BUT LEVEL OF DISCONTENT IN GHANA NOW IS SUCH THAT WE BELIEVE ACHEAMPONG CANNOT HANG ON MUCH LONGER.

11. RECOMMENDATION: FOR THESE REASONS, AND WITHOUT ATTEMPTING TO PREJUDGE WASHINGTON'S DECISION, WE

BELIEVE THAT TO PROVIDE THE KIND OF ASSISTANCE  
ACHEAMPONG HAS ASKED FOR WOULD IN FACT INVOLVE US  
DEEPLY IN THE INTERNAL STRUGGLE HERE AND BE SEEN IN  
GHANA AS OPEN US SUPPORT OF A CORRUPT AND INCREASINGLY  
UNPOPULAR MILITARY REGIME. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND  
THAT WE TURN DOWN HIS REQUEST--AS GENTLY AS POSSIBLE  
SINCE HE MAY STILL BE WITH US FOR A WHILE--OR PERHAPS  
SUGGEST THE ICRC OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODY AS A  
POSSIBLE SOURCE OF HELP. I DOUBT THAT EITHER  
BRITAIN OR NIGERIA WILL RESPOND AFFIRMATIVELY, AND  
I DO NOT THINK IT WOULD BE IN OUR NATIONAL INTEREST  
TO DO SO.

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## Message Attributes

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